

LIFE

Indi Gregory: that obstinate craving for death

LIFE AND BIOETHICS

14_11_2023



**Riccardo
Cascioli**



There was little to be fooled about, as we noted in recent days. Even if the battle for Indi's life had to be fought and it was right to hold on to that a glimmer of hope, Indi's fate was sealed from the beginning of this story. We have already seen what happens from previous cases - Charlie, Alfie, Isaiah, Archie, Sudiksha, ... -, when doctors decide for the patient's death, the whole system locks together if the families try to put up

obstacles. Power maintains an appearance of democracy by allowing hearings, appeals and even counter-appeals and counter-appeals, but they all invariably end in the same way: doctors, judges, even the police forces back each other, to give an impression of justice to what is instead an arbitrary execution. And if someone tries to interfere from abroad – be it a UN body as it was for Archie or the Italian government, as it was for Indi and Alfie – the British System simply ignores it: the United Kingdom recognises no other power other than its own.

But what is most striking is the tenacity shown in wanting death, and in wanting it on one's own terms: any compromise or alternative solutions are categorically excluded. To the point of challenging evidence, logic, common sense. So, it's right to ask why.

The judges supported the narrative of the doctors who spoke of Indi as a child suffering terribly, for whom the prolongation of her life would only have been a useless and cruel agony. This too is a script that has already been used before, yet there was evidence of a very different situation: the videos and photos released by the parents, Dean and Claire, showed a little baby without any signs of suffering or discomfort, who is not in tremendous pain, who actually reacts to stimuli as much as the disease allows. She certainly could not be healed from her illness, but she could have been treated until her natural death occurred.

So maybe the problem is economic? Is it the social cost of allowing these sick people to occupy a place in intensive care for weeks and months, taking away resources to treat people who instead have hope of recovery? It seems not: in Indi's case, as in other previous cases, the British State would even have saved money because the costs of transfer and hospitalisation to other facilities would not have weighed on British taxpayers. For Indi, they would have been totally paid for by the Italian government and the Bambin Gesù Hospital, and even in previous cases the families had guaranteed zero costs for the British State.

Of course, national pride and a sense of sovereignty needs to be taken into account, which would be dented by having to recognise that another country is able to offer services and therapies not available in the United Kingdom. While Alfie and Indi's parents were hoping to come to Italy, 19-year-old Sudiksha had already secured a place in Canada or the United States. But can this suffice to explain the predictable outcome of these cases? Does it justify the State taking over the lives of its citizens who are not even granted the possibility of a second opinion within British borders?

In this regard, it has to be recognised, this is the other face of the welfare state: in

the United Kingdom the state guarantees everything, from birth to death, the National Health Service is a source of pride, it is the cornerstone of the country. But the State's generosity comes with a price: in exchange you are forced to delegate your own health, to the point that even the tests and analysis reports are kept by the health district, the patient owns nothing, communication is from doctor to doctor. And in the end, it is doctors who decide for patients' lives.

But, even this is still not enough to explain the fury expressed in these cases.

Or rather, perhaps it's possible to help us understand the doctors, whose honour might be damaged, but certainly not the judges. In fact, last Saturday the judges called to decide on the place where Indi should die, seemed like ferocious wolves from whose mouth someone was trying to snatch the prey they had already conquered. It was a dramatic hearing, which we gave a summary, which resulted in a long and harsh indictment against the lawyers who defended the reasons of Indi's parents: a serious intimidation against those who dared to hinder the prepared plan, who delayed with their opposition a fate already decided. So, why did the judges care so much that Indi didn't survive?

Let's also add the ideological element, a petty vision of the meaning of life, reduced to a pure efficiency criterion: if the quality of life falls below a certain level then it becomes useless, it's not worth living, it's just a burden for society and therefore it must be eliminated. Certainly, the doctors and judges in question think so, but can all this really be enough to justify such ferocity? To the point that even the police have to get involved, as happened for Alfie, to ensure that nothing else stands in the way of the death sentence being executed?

After having followed many cases of this kind, all these reasons - ideology, conception of the State, corporate pride - still do not appear sufficient to us. There is something that escapes reasoning and which cannot be seen on the surface, perhaps some unspeakable reason. We are obviously unable to go beyond this sensation, but this stubborn desire for death cannot help but make us restless.